

BLACKFRIARS

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RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

KANT. By A. D. Lindsay. (*Leaders of Philosophy Series.* Benn; 12/6.)

The description on the cover, 'this biography,' is justified in that Kant's life was the development of his thought and the picture given of his thought is at the same time a vivid impression of the man; the short first chapter is more properly speaking biographical and shows him much more human than is generally supposed, a fine card-player who gave up cards after his student days because he could not stand slow play, a great conversationalist with guests always sharing his one meal, a witty professor who aimed at teaching his students 'not thoughts to repeat, but how to think.'

The body of the book is a sympathetic exposition and criticism of Kant's philosophy considered as a whole, beginning with a chapter on Kant's pre-critical writings and his relation to his predecessors and ending with a short section entitled *The Upshot of the Critical System*. The last chapter of the book sketches very shortly the Influence of Kant's Philosophy.

The Master of Balliol has given an interpretation which should unlock Kant to many students of philosophy, and even produce the impression of understanding in others who will read intelligently, provided they make the necessary effort of sustained attention. He writes: 'The only way of understanding Kant is to make up your mind what the main thing he has to say is (and that in the circumstances has in it an element of judgement, involving as it does appreciation of the general tendencies of the work), and to make that the key to the interpretation of the details.' That this is truer of Kant than of any earlier writer will be admitted by all who have experienced the *bouleversement* of that first thrill of comprehension and the subsequent disappointment of failing to make the details fit, and yet have persevered despite the difficulties that appear whatever new solution is attempted. It is inevitable that a student should see philosophical systems through the spectacles of his teacher, and that this is not an insuperable limitation is shown by the difficulty of conjecturing the stages by which Dr. Lindsay reached the view he has now presented. Other people's spectacles are apt to produce impressions that seem distorted, but we can be prepared for this and the present writer is grateful for having been enabled to see better in many dark passages.

Dr. Lindsay traces much of the difficulty of Kantian interpretation to a gradual development in the meaning of Kant's technical terms, corresponding to the gradual unfolding of his own

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thought, and to his constant failure to catch up with the criticism of his old assumptions required by his new discoveries. He is shown as concerned to reconcile Leibniz with Newton rather than with Hume (' Kant's knowledge of the English empiricists was very imperfect '), the presuppositions of Newtonian physics with the principles underlying morals and religion rather than with the presuppositions of Wolffian or any other kind of metaphysics.

Dr. Lindsay has tried to show the unity of the Critical Philosophy as it developed in Kant's mind, and to maintain its substantial soundness; he has aimed principally at showing that the dispute between epistemological idealism and realism is irrelevant to the main purport of what Kant has to say. It is perhaps natural that his interpretation should be hardest to grasp and least convincing at the cardinal points of the system, such as the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories which many would hold to be the nerve of the whole Critical Philosophy. Since he maintains that no defensible interpretation can be made of this section, but only suggestions as to the line of argument which would be most fruitful if consistently worked out, it would be unprofitable to argue that his method of criticism is not well suited to bring out Kant's real meaning which must be such as to enable him to think he had established the validity of the Categories for *consciousness as such*. The lack of a satisfactory interpretation matters little as the connexion of the Deduction with the following section of the *Critique* is made very clear.

The impressive case he makes out of the unity of Kant's philosophy and especially for his importance for ethical theory will justify Dr. Lindsay's claim that he must be of profound interest to all who do not ' regard philosophical contemplation as a refuge from the struggle with a disillusioning world.'

QUENTIN JOHNSTON, O.P.

THE VISION OF GOD. The Christian Doctrine of the *Summum Bonum*; Bampton Lectures for 1928. By Kenneth E. Kirk. Abridged edition. (Longmans, Green ; 7/6.)

This edition (the passages on the history of penance, notes, and some other sections have been omitted) has been so arranged as to read as a complete book. Its grace, its profound learning, its argument make it an invaluable asset to us, more especially in view of the dearth of good Catholic books in English on such subjects and the abundance of bad ones.

The two conflicting streams, of rigorism and humanism, in the Church's history are followed from their anticipations among Jews and pagans down to the present day, and their validity in the light of the Gospel profoundly discussed. It is the